

The **PREVENTION** CONNECTION

NEWSLETTER

Cultivating Imagination

By Melissa Kwasney

It was my first day with the second-graders at Rossiter School and I was halfway through my introduction of poetry as “pictures we paint with words.” I wrote the word “Image” on the board and immediately Jesse Morsette, a boy in the first row, raised his hand. “White people call them images,” he said. “Indians call them visions.”

As a *poet in the schools* (what people in the field refer to as an artist-in-residence) I have thought often of Jesse’s unexpected and profound statement, especially as it pertains to our culture’s attitude toward imaginative work. “Imaginary” has come to mean false or unreal. To remark that someone has a good imagination is likely to mean that he or she exaggerates or even lies. A poet has his/her head in the clouds and a painter can’t possibly be expected to arrive on time. Artists, it is intimated, do not participate in the fact-based, pragmatic “real world” that the rest of us do.

And yet, at the same time that we are measuring a board or cooking a child’s breakfast or entering figures into a computer, we are living inside our bodies and in our minds. Each of us inhabits a complex interior world ruled

by our five senses, our dreams, our reactions to beauty and ugliness, to what we love and hate. We have emotional lives, dream lives, lives motivated by our desires and our perceptions, our intuitions and thoughts. It is, as the poet Denise Levertov says, “our most human function”—the imagination.

Over and over, I ask children to define imagination. Even kindergartners have no trouble answering me: “It is like riding a horse in your mind.” “Magic!” “Thinking with your eyes.” Over and over, I see their minds light up when I ask them questions like “What could fit inside a balloon?” or “What does blue smell like?” I ask my older students: “If Jealousy were a person, would it be male or female?” “What about Depression?” “Happiness?” What is the imagination to them? A high school student of mine named Jannette Deyo once answered it at the end of her poem: “It is my soul naked and twitching.”

My job, as artist-in-residence, is to help students develop the imagination and to use the tools of expressive language in order to do it: metaphor, simile, personification, detail, acute observation of the world around them and their responses to it. We are constantly asking children to express themselves, and yet, they are. Violence, whether self-inflicted or inflicted on the

world is a perfect example of expressed rage, confusion, self-hatred, revenge. To teach children to use words is to open a more personally powerful means of expression to them, the knowledge that what they say is of value. We, in turn, must be ready to listen.

Melissa Kwasney has worked as a poet in the schools for the past fourteen years: in San Francisco for the California Poets in the Schools program, for the Missoula Writing Collaborative, and currently, for the Montana Arts Council’s Arts in Education program. For information on this program, see the web site at: www.art.state.mt.us/

Note: A poem written by one of Melissa’s students is included on page 3.

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The Jan and Vicki Column

How many times have you heard a song that immediately had you humming along, or seen a painting or photograph that gave you goosebumps? It's been said that no one *ever* reads the same book. That's because art—music, visual art, dance, literature or drama—is visceral, communicating uniquely with each of us. Art also tells the story of how times change; these images reflect cultures and lifestyles and, ultimately, shape the era in which they are created.

The prevention community has discovered that art can affect an individual's propensity to engage in risk behaviors. Art programs can provide forums through which youth can explore themselves and discover their talents. In a time when teens often feel misunderstood and lost, art programs and activities offer a safe haven that allows explo-

ration and expression. My thirteen year-old son aptly describes the power of art expression as "somewhere that you can find yourself." That's the crux of it. Youth involved in the arts develop a sense of identity that becomes a powerful influence in developing the adults they will become.

Across Montana, our youth have created skits, poems, murals and songs, capturing language and conveying a message that is meaningful and poignant. As you read this issue of the *Prevention Connection*, we are sure that you, too, will be amazed at the bounteous gifts of Montana's youth and the communities that support them.

*With best wishes for
the holidays,
Jan & Vicki*

Notes from the Edge

By Jenny Sawicki

In one of my earliest memories, I remember standing on stage, holding my microphone and singing to a crowd of smiling people . . . until the song was over and the stage reverted to a wooden block, the microphone to a melting Popsicle. The crowd was usually friends or family, who seemed to enjoy laughing as I sang. I don't think it bothered me though, because I just kept on singing.

Then the unthinkable happened and my parents were divorced. Instead of pretending I was singing on stage, I was trying to take care of myself and get through the days. I did not understand why my parents had to be apart. I just noticed that they were hurting so much that they could not take care of me. My brother was so busy with school that he could not watch over me, either. I was eleven years old and felt very alone and unsure.

Sadly, I ended up turning away from singing and toward drugs, alcohol and sex for enjoyment and love. They provided

only empty promises and lies, though, destructive to my body and heart. Did you know that if you put a frog in boiling water it will jump out, but if you put a frog in cold water and let it begin to boil, it will boil to death? It is kind of a weird and gross analogy, but it is a good comparison to what I was going through as a young teen. I was boiling to death because I chose to use drugs, alcohol and to be in relationships that were over my head. They crept into my life slowly. They distorted my hope and goals and made them fade away.

I was still involved in singing events, such as school music performances and honor choir. Even though the events were good experiences, I was not too excited about them because I had "other things" on my mind. I was stuck in a rut and I did not know where to turn. When I sang and acted, I knew I felt better, but I still went back to the hurtful things.

My grandfather was the principal of Billings Central Catholic High School.

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Notes from the Edge

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He took me along to all the singing events that the Central students performed. Once we saw *Little Shop of Horrors*. It was the best thing I had ever seen on stage! They were all shining up there and it was so funny and enjoyable that I began to wonder if I could be up there someday. I thought maybe if I went to Central, I could be as good as they were.

Those performances gave me hope. They also helped me make a tough decision. I decided to go to Central instead of the school all my friends were going to attend. I chose to leave behind all of my friends to move on to things that were good for me instead of hurtful and dangerous.

Central was waiting for me with open arms as I turned the corner from despair to hope. I enrolled in religion classes and learned a whole new meaning of faith, hope and love. I got involved in basketball, softball, student council, honor society, prayer group and many other activities. My grades came up from F, D and C levels to C, B and A levels! Best of all, music was alive in me again!

We had a small girls' choir my freshman year. I was chosen out of the crowd to take voice lessons. Mrs. Rosalie Foster was one of the best teachers in Billings and one of the best teachers I have ever had. She became my "music mom" and she taught me a whole new way of music and singing. I was so honored to be her student.

Things were beginning to look up for me and I was starting to grow in a healthy way. But though I was gradually turning away from drugs, alcohol and sex, I was still struggling. I still needed to make a decision to change totally. It seemed impossible because I still felt so alone. I didn't know who to talk to, until one special day that I remember very well.

The school musical auditions were taking place and I decided to audition. We were putting on the Broadway musical, *Annie*. I knew that if I got the part of Annie, then I would be really busy with the show and that would give me a reason to say "no" to the parties. It would help me have the strength to break off a hurtful relationship with a boy I had been dating. It was the excuse I had been waiting for so that I could finally give up the bad things and do what I really wanted to do in order to change.

So one day I took time out to go into our beautiful and peaceful chapel in the heart of Billings Central. I knew I could

talk to God. I took a step in the door. I pleaded. I prayed. I once again hoped like I did when I was a little girl. And I cried. "If I get this part, Lord, then I know that I will be able to change."

The next day, a whole crowd was standing next to the cast list posted on the wall near the cafeteria. Before I could even reach the list, my friend Angie ran up to me and gave me a big hug and told me that I had the lead role! I was Annie.

At last my dream came true. I was on a real stage, singing! People were smiling and clapping and somewhere in the audience, I know someone was encouraged by what we did on stage—just like I was encouraged when I watched students perform before I went to Central. On account of how great the performances went, I just blasted off with hope!

I became involved in choir at school and began singing in my church choir. I was in an all-state and all-northwest choir that covered Montana, Washington and Oregon—and I even had solos at those events! I was the Fairy Godmother in the performance of *Cinderella*. So many beautiful opportunities—and I was willing to take them right away! At the end of my junior year, I was chosen for *Up With People*—and I traveled all over the world singing about togetherness, cultural awareness and world peace. I was sharing what music had done for me with the whole world!

Then, before I knew it, high school was coming to an end and it was time for graduation. At the graduation ceremonies, I was blessed to have the chance to sing to my friends and the rest of the audience. I sang to them with tears in my eyes because I realized that music, the opportunities and support it had brought me, would send me on to new possibilities.

—Jenny Sawicki is now 20 years old. She traveled with *Up With People* as the "Cast A American Beat Soloist" from July–December 2000, and continued her touring experience as a soloist with a group called the "Continental Singers" from January–May 2001. For a solid year, she toured all over the United States and Europe doing what she loves most. She has been "off tour" for six months and is serving as an America Reads VISTA with the Bitterroot Elementary School in Billings.

CHOICES

by Meghan Harrington

*So many choices
for our young minds
to choose from
short hair
or long
dyed or
shaved off
a piercing
perhaps
in the ear
in the eyebrow
or maybe the tongue
So many choices
to drink
or to not
a condom
or no
the pill
or the sponge
or depoprovera
So many things
for our young minds
to think about
save that can
for recycling
and global warming
and new cars
So many things
verbs and adjectives
speed and velocity
graphing calculators
and tests
math tests
English tests
AIDS tests
And so many questions
that sadly
have answers
that are YES
Have you ever dropped acid?
Have you ever been drunk?
Have you ever smoked pot?
Have you ever had sex?
Have you ever smoked pot?
So many things
Yes
I've had to keep secrets
Yes
I've had to say no
Yes
We've all made mistakes
they happen in a second
now it's the day after pill
or a trip to the hospital
yes
So many things
for our young minds
to think about*

— from Melissa Kwasney's Helena
High School 12th grade class

Why the Arts?

From Americans for the Arts

<http://www.americansforthearts.org/about/>

START

The Montana Arts Council (MAC) is the recipient of highly-competitive and substantial funding from the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds' national State Arts Partnership for Cultural Participation initiative (START). The intent of the START initiative is to enable state arts agencies to establish and expand program standards and practices that increase participation in, and support for, the arts. This initiative supports state arts agencies' efforts to adopt effective guidelines, programs and funding practices aimed at encouraging broader public participation in the arts. MAC will use these funds in support of the Building Arts Participation grant program.

The Building Arts Participation grant program is designed with a specific purpose—to increase the resources of Montana's arts organizations. Resources are defined as audiences, revenues, leadership and volunteerism. Building Arts Participation grants will fund model projects that assist non-profit arts organizations to broaden, deepen or diversify arts participation within their organization.

For guidelines, due dates, range of funding and eligibility information, contact the Montana Arts Council at 406-444-6430 or mac@state.mt.us.

Juvenile justice programs, including probation and detention, may be the only options for some youngsters who present a danger to their communities. But the more than 4,000,000 at-risk children growing up in severely distressed neighborhoods, those surrounded by brutality, violence and despair, deserve a chance to engage in positive, constructive activities that have been proven effective in deterring delinquent behavior. Training in the arts can provide such an opportunity. Learning to play a musical instrument, rehearsing a play or executing a mosaic mural all require long hours of practice, focus and perseverance—all of which are components of self-discipline, a trait many at-risk youth are desperately lacking.

Youth Arts Programs Work

In a national study, three cities rigorously evaluated their arts programs for at-risk youth and found that these programs:

- decrease involvement in delinquent behavior;
- increase academic achievement; and
- improve youth's attitudes about themselves and their future.

According to early research findings by the U.S. Department of Justice, participants in these youth arts programs exhibit remarkable improvements in several areas.

Skills: Increased ability to express anger appropriately, to communicate effectively with adults and their peers and to cooperate with others. Increased ability to work on tasks from start to finish, which is vital for both academic and vocational success.

Attitudes and Behavior: More likely to report decreased frequency of delinquent behavior than their nonparticipating peers. More likely to show improvements in their attitudes toward school, self-esteem and self-efficacy than are nonparticipating youth.

Court Involvement: Fewer new court referrals during the program period, as compared to nonparticipating youth. New offenses committed during the program period tended to be less severe than those committed prior to the program.

Arts Participation = Improved Academic Performance

A longitudinal study of 25,000 students reveals that involvement in the arts leads to greater success in school, regardless of socioeconomic status. The study links cognitive and developmental benefits to involvement in the arts:

- Higher grades.
- Higher scores in standardized tests.
- Increased community service activity.
- Lower dropout rates.

Arts Programs = Higher Graduation Rates

For at-risk youth, truancy and school failure are the two most significant predictors of delinquent behavior, according to U.S. Department of Justice research. Arts programs reach at-risk youth and help them stay in school. This has a profound effect on youth development and on communities, considering that the unemployment rate of high school dropouts is 70 percent higher than that of high school graduates.

At-risk youth participating in arts and prevention programs are staying in school and graduating. Participants in the specific arts programs studied have also exhibited higher rates of graduation and college attendance than comparable youth in their communities.

—For more information, see the *AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS* website: <http://www.americansforthearts.org/upcoming/index.html>, or contact: Americans for the Arts, 1000 Vermont Avenue NW, 12th Floor, Washington DC 20005, Phone: 202-371-2830, or Fax: 202-371-0424

Vid-Kid Productions

Meagher County

In 1993, BJ Hawkins and an enthusiastic group of 4-H members developed the first and only 4-H TV/Video Project in Montana. Cosponsored by Meagher County Public Television, Inc., the Vid-Kids wrote a successful Montana Innovative Programming Grant to finance their first year of production, and created a



Andy and Ellen on location at Fort Peck Reservation at Frazer School

short instructional video, "Making 4-H Videos." Funding by the Montana 4-H Foundation enabled the purchase of a video camera used for on-location images for their 4-H television show.

Although many networks feature youth on television shows, not many involve them in production of the shows they star in. In this unique 4-H project, youth are in charge. They write, direct, tape, edit and star in their own television shows. When their production skills reach the level of professionalism required for "contract" work, they are moved into working on video jobs for other non-profits. As "contract Vid-Kids," participants learn to build budgets, work with adult clients and keep track of expenses—all while producing professional-quality videos.

Vid-Kids also learn how to teach others their skills. They have given workshops for incoming VISTAs at the Montana State Capitol, the Western 4-H Leadership Congress in Salt Lake City, Utah and the Regional Leader Forum in Hawaii. They have conducted Public Service Announcement (PSA) workshops in Roundup, Harlowton and Frazer.

Within its first year of operation, the group had a professional contract with the Montana 4-H Foundation. Vid-Kids were asked to produce a funding tape that ultimately helped the foundation raise over \$250,000, which enabled continued

work on behalf of all Montana 4-H members. Since then, Vid-Kids have worked for a variety of clients, including the National 4-H Council, Montana Bowhunters Association, the Charles M. Bair Museum, Glasgow HIV Prevention, Montana Boy Scouts, Montana State 4-H, Benefis Healthcare, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Montana Arts Council.

Together, Hawkins and the Vid-Kids have traveled around the country, from New York City to Hawaii. In 1999, Vid-Kid Productions was asked to create a PSA production workshop in Glasgow, about the Fort Peck Reservation. The PSA, "Save Our Culture," has won many awards and was screened at the Sundance Film Festival last year. During that trip, the Vid-Kids and Hawkins were introduced to Austin Haerberle, Project Coordinator for *Listen Up!* Afterward, Vid-Kids became a contributing and funded production group for that organization.

JAG

As part of the Meagher County Prevention Coalition, Hawkins became aware that Meagher County was having trouble finding supervisors for juvenile offenders sentenced to community service. It seemed a good fit to have juvenile offenders do more than pick up garbage. In 1998, Hawkins developed a Public Service Announcement (PSA) program to help curb recidivism among juvenile offenders. The Montana Board of Crime Control funded the project, *Juvenile Accountability through Video Production (JAG)*. Under this program, youth sentenced to community service



Rachel Dunkin, Shawni Schraner and Kane Shepard (Left to Right)

are required to produce a PSA on the consequences of inappropriate behavior. Juvenile offenders must research their offenses on-line, using the Montana Code, fill out a circle of consequences and learn the production skills necessary to complete a 30-second PSA. After a private intake interview, a production group is formed with other juvenile offenders. These youth work together to produce the PSA. While most kids enter JAG thinking the project will be a "piece of cake," they discover that they must develop tag lines, research their topic, recruit actors, scout locations, learn camera and editing basics and pull it all together in a finished product—and all in 30 hours.

JAG is now in its fourth year and has an overall success rate of 77 percent.

JAG and Vid-Kids both actively encourage youth to use video and television production to give voice to their interests, issues and activities—all while learning to work as a team, train other youth in production and develop social responsibility.

Note: Work from the Vid-Kids and JAG can be seen on the *Listen Up* web site at www.listenup.org/vidkids.

—For more information, contact BJ Hawkins at bjhawkins@email.msn.com.



Nick Atkins, Eric Berg and Laura Taylor (seated left to right), Andy Atkins (standing)

ARToberfest: *Make a Difference Day 2001*

By Brie A. King, PRC VISTA, White Sulphur Springs

Once upon a time, in a tiny Montana town called White Sulphur Springs, there was a Youth Center that dreamed of a community goulash of art. They believed in a main street brimming with smocked

kids covered in paint, puppet people parading by the post, patriotic Girl Scouts serenading the nursing home with bursting lungs, and a metallic wonder burning bright in the wind-blown sun.

But let me back up and explain. We here at Stevens Youth Center in White Sulphur Springs decided to fall forward into a month-long celebration of Make a Difference Day and figured no title was more appropriate than ARToberfest. Instead of doing a one-day blowout, we decided to spread visiting artist workshops throughout the month and use the appointed day to show off the brilliance rising from these fests.

The first artist to hop on board was the wonderful Miss Grayce Holzheimer from Choteau, Montana. We really lucked out: not only was she pumped to lead her giant puppet-making workshop, she had great ideas for our metal sculpture project. Grayce galloped into town in early October and spent a fabulous week working with the high school shop teacher and his welding class to construct a sculptural trio of artistic wonders. Anyone with an artistic itch was invited to drop by and draw a design on a steel square, which resulted in a collaborative extravaganza of metal.

By her second week, Grayce was a star. She had kids waving to her everywhere she went. The giant puppet-making workshop began with a huge crowd of kids who were more than eager to dig their hands in clay and wallpaper paste. We made huge paper maché heads of dragons, witches, and unidentified monsters, which we attached to sticks or backpack stilts. But we were not

quite done. For a more personal, more sticky touch, we lay quietly on the floor, closed our chatty mouths, and welcomed mummification, all for the chance to make gauze masks of our face and all its crinkles. By the time they were painted and adorned with beads and feather, we were fit for any fancy masquerade ball.

Make a Difference Day finally arrived. We met at the town gazebo at 10 a.m. for the puppet parade. Kids shuffled out of minivans ready to go, only to be sidelined by the mean wind. We didn't want a gust to sweep up under the puppet and send the kids off into the mountains, so we sat tight and painted faces for a bit. Once it was deemed safe, an abbreviated parade commenced, trotting down Main Street, waving at flustered hunters, and surprising the nursing home residents with a window show. Unfortunately, spirits inside the home were not as high as those outside, and a flu plague forced us to reschedule our concert. But the metal sculpture stood its own against the wind and drew many a compliment among the lunch crowd.

The colossal canvas painting was forced to leave its Main Street location, victim to atrocious winds, but morale failed to fizzle. The painting party moved to a garage uptown. Guest artist Allison Williams led an excursion into abstraction, helping kids paint in stencils of Impressionist painter Henri Matisse's favorite oddities and shapes. Paint footprints still speckle the sidewalk, testifying to the great time had by all that day.

You might be saying, "but what does all of this silliness have to do with making a difference?" Silliness, you see, is an indispensable part of life that often fades when your name beings appearing on the power bill. Our objective in this desired goulash was to show our tiny, rural town the inherent fun in art. Our community is in a general lack of smiles and if donning a giant Frankenstein puppet and walking down Main Street can perk up a few faces, then we say hurrah! Bring out the puppets and send in the Matissian clowns!



YouthARTS

By Kristine Knutson, PRC VISTA
Ravalli County

"There's nothing to do!" This was the complaint of Ravalli County youth, and the impetus that led to the formation of a coalition that included more than two hundred concerned, prevention-minded adults—*Kids First of Ravalli County*. One of the efforts of Kids First is an after-school arts program that began on October 23, 2001.

YouthARTS is based on a best practice model that targets at-risk youth and offers the opportunity for young people to express themselves through healthy, productive, artistic activities. Although the program has only existed for a short time, more than twenty at-risk middle school and high school students have attended regularly. In fact, the high school students, who are expected at Tuesday classes, often attend Thursdays as well. They enjoy the program, and interact on a positive level with the middle school students.

School counselors, mental health professionals, probation officers and the First Offender Council of Ravalli County all make referrals to YouthARTS. The program does not discriminate, but it does target young people who have demonstrated risky behaviors. Some of the students served may be dealing with divorce, fighting addictions, struggling to stay focused in school or they may be on probation. YouthARTS allows youth to the freedom to express themselves and create healthy relationships with concerned adults, which builds confidence and self-esteem.

Adults are an integral part of the YouthARTS model and Ravalli County is fortunate to have a plethora of individuals who strive to improve life for the next generation. The program involves a number of artists who receive a small stipend in exchange for demonstrating their talents. These artists work closely with the students. In Ravalli County, more than thirty artists have expressed interest in

YouthARTS. Additionally, counselors and adult volunteers are present during sessions, to serve as informal mentors. Counselors receive a small stipend and interact weekly with the students. They often become trusted mentors.

Kids First is enthusiastic and optimistic about the impact of YouthARTS, and strongly believes that it will help improve the outlook for participants and the community at large, as Ravalli County continues to flourish as a Community of Promise.



According to the November 1998 issue of Monographs, an Americans for the Arts publication, "For more than a decade, an interdisciplinary team of researchers, policy analysts and artists has studied what happens in non-school youth organizations . . . This research has found that organizations that center activities in the arts enable youth who attend their programs regularly to improve their academic standing, increase their abilities in self-assessment and motivation, and raise their sense of the importance of planning and working for a positive future for themselves and their communities."

Ravalli County was named a Community of Promise in 1997. Becoming a Community of Promise has given Ravalli County the opportunity to participate in a variety of programs and to receive special funding opportunities. Americans for the Arts provided one such opportunity. The YouthARTS Tool Kit was produced by the YouthARTS Development Project, a collaborative effort of various art councils, including Americans for the Arts, Washington, D.C. Americans for the Arts provided the best practice model to Kids First of Ravalli County. The Community Incentive Grant through the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services has provided start-up funding.

—For more information, contact
Kristine Knutson, Americorps VISTA,
at Kids First of Ravalli County at (406)
375-9588.



Toolkit

The YouthARTS Toolkit, developed as part of this initiative, includes a handbook that addresses aspects of developing and maintaining a youth arts program; a video that can be used as an advocacy tool for potential funders or partners; and a diskette that includes sample data-collection forms, contracts, and other materials helpful to youth arts programs. The YouthARTS Toolkit is available for \$75.00 by calling Americans for the Arts: 1-800-321-4510.

Pew Funds Available for Civic Engagement

The Pew Charitable Trusts recently made funds available to Providence College, through which to create a network of public high schools that actively pursue advancing youth civic engagement. The project will establish 200-250 participating high schools in 10 sites (either single school districts or consortia of districts). In each site, a small group of students, with the assistance of teachers and administrators, will conduct "civic audits" of their schools, assessing what their schools do well in terms of providing opportunities to engage in the public life of their communities, and what could be improved. The RFP will be developed by early November 2001, and applications will be due February 15, 2002. Sites will be selected in early March, and schools will begin projects in September 2002. The applicant can be a school district, a consortium of districts, a non-profit organization, a Local Education Fund, or an institution of higher education working in conjunction with school district(s). Each site chosen to participate will receive up to \$100,000 to fund a site coordinator and related expenses necessary to carry out the objectives of the grant. In addition, the lead teacher in each participating school will receive a small stipend for his/her participation and training.

*For more information, contact:
Eric Goldman, Field Director
National High School Civic Engagement Initiative 703-243-7740
egoldman@postoffice.providence.edu*

Succeeding and Belonging: Bringing Arts to the Schools

By Renee Taaffe, Curator of Education, Art Museum of Missoula

In five public schools in Missoula, stories of how the arts impact children are being heard more frequently, thanks to the efforts of the Art Museum of Missoula's After School Arts Program and the Flagship Project. Third graders excitedly ask their classroom teachers if they can write poetry as part of their classroom assignments. Kindergartners create painterly compositions that show design skills far beyond those their ages would dictate. A reserved fifth grade girl becomes outgoing and talkative with her peers after excelling in dance class.

The art museum, with its core mission to promote education and learning through art, has long been looking for ways to make arts and the museum more accessible to the Missoula community. Though the museum has a large contingent of supporters, many area residents are unaware that it exists. Lack of resources—including time, energy and transportation—also prevent families from visiting the museum, and yet there is dire need for creative opportunities for children. Art education in the local elementary schools is extremely limited, with only two art teachers serving the nine public schools in the district. The after school arts program became a way to address the needs of families and children.

The art museum works with the Flagship Project as a way of bringing the arts to schools serving large percentages of low-income and at-risk kids. Flagship is currently operating in several schools that serve this population. This initiative provides asset-building activities and services to youth at school sites, and offers programs that are fun and interesting for kids—programs that encourage healthy behavior and civic responsibility. The

Flagship Project dovetails neatly with the art museum's programs. The museum provides a talented group of artists and teachers as well as art supplies. Registration, space and after school snacks are provided by Flagship's team of Youth Development Coordinators (YDC's).

The programming offered by the Art Museum has turned into an integral part of the Flagship project. Rosalie Buzzas, Program Manager for Flagship writes: *"These (art) classes have been extremely successful and popular with our students. As you know the arts are an important avenue for self-discovery and self-growth. We have heard a number of stories from our site coordinators that these art offerings have been the connection for many kids who have not identified with the more traditional athletic and club offerings."*

The visual arts are central to the art museum's programs, with classes offered Monday through Thursday in the elementary schools. The museum has also collaborated with other art organizations in Missoula in order to offer a multi-disciplinary arts program. Dance teachers from the University of Montana's affiliated Mo-Trans Dance Company teach a range of classes including creative movement and hip-hop. These aren't your typical dance classes—instead of black leotards and pink tutus, girls and boys of all shapes and sizes dance in jeans and sweats as they learn the joy of movement and rhythm.

The after school arts program also offers poetry classes. Teachers are selected through the Missoula Writing Collaborative, a group of professional writers who bring poetry into the schools. Teacher and artistic director Sheryl Noethe tells of a second grader who was initially withdrawn. As the classes continued and he was encouraged to write and draw with others, he began to blossom. Visual arts teachers have similar stories to tell: art classes have given kids opportunities to excel.

"I would love to go on a poem stepping and running on the words,"

— a fourth grader in the After School Arts Program

Succeeding and Belonging

Continued from Page 8

Students come back year after year wanting to continue to work with a particular art teacher. The program's teachers are professional artists chosen because of their interest and enthusiasm in sharing their skills with children. They serve as models in presenting the arts as a viable career choice. They also bring a special element into the classroom because they know what it takes to encourage a truly creative experience and to work individually with students. Project flexibility allows students to explore different directions in their creativity. This sense of ownership—whether in creating a painting, writing poetry or dancing—makes the program successful and encourages the bond between teachers and students.

Parents are also an important part of the program. They often come to observe and sometimes to participate. They attend end-of-session celebrations to show their support for their children. At these events, the walls are covered with student artwork and kids perform their

favorite poems and dances, some of which they have choreographed.

Students flourish in these classes. Unfortunately, kids are often turned away because there is just not enough space. To ensure quality learning and individualized instruction, the Art Museum of Missoula strives to keep class sizes at less than twelve students. There is a such a huge demand for creative experience that classes often grow beyond optimum numbers because children bring friends and siblings to participate.

The art museum has received grants from the Montana Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and from private foundations, but continues to seek funding for their program.

As poet Sheryl Noethe writes "We need to make children artists, to give them the chance to rise in the world and achieve! And succeed! And belong!"

—To find out more about the Art Museum of Missoula and its programs please call Renee Taaffe at 406-728-0447 or visit the art museum at its website: www.artmissoula.org

Profiles

Photography: Like Poetry in Itself

In the mid-1980s, David J. Spear was working and teaching at the International Center of Photography, a museum on the Upper Eastside of Manhattan, a safe and wealthy neighborhood of the city. Part of the mission of the museum was outreach, with the goal of taking photography to people who normally would not come to the museum.

One day, David found himself standing on the corner of East 96th Street and Madison Avenue looking north into East Harlem. As he watched underserved inner-city young people playing in the streets, he realized that this could be an important starting point for the museum's community outreach program. David and his group connected with a teacher from a school on 106th Street, and brought cameras and

instruction to her history class. Soon these young people began to document their neighborhood. By year's end, the collaborative process had produced a calendar with photographs and writings on the community by the young people from the class.

Work continued in the 106th Street School for the next eleven years. In addition, David and his group were able to build a community outreach program at the museum. That project is on-going and has served thousands of New York City young people from East Harlem and other areas of New York. After years of work with the programs in New York, Spear became more and more interested in putting this kind of outreach into a rural context. As a result, David and his wife implemented the Summer Photography

Continued on Page 10

Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)

Mission: *To create and sustain a coordinated and comprehensive system of prevention services in the state of Montana*

Prevention Resource Center
P.O. Box 4210
Helena, MT 59604
(406) 444-1928
Fax: (406) 444-1970

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MT Board of Crime Control

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Ex-officio

Staff

Jan Lombardi

smART Resources

Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds
The Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds
create opportunities for enrichment
through better schools, enhanced
community activities, and
participation in the arts.
<http://www.wallacefunds.org>

Arts Programs for At-Risk Youth
Americans for the Arts is a national
organization that supports the arts
and culture through private
and public resources.
<http://www.artsusa.org/education/youth.html>

National Endowment for the Arts
Arts features, interviews, new work in
the Gallery and Writer's Corner. Learn
about the exceptional work being
done by artists and arts organizations
across the country.
<http://arts.endow.gov/>

Get M: Global Education
Through Music
"Inspiring the world one beat at a time."
<http://www.get-m.org/why.htm>

Art as Prevention
A National Clearinghouse for Alcohol
and Drug Information site.
<http://www.health.org/features/artprevent/>

Profiles: Photography

Continued from Page 9

Workshops of the Lower Flathead.

The 2001 Summer Photography Workshops served 89 young people from eight Flathead Reservation communities in Western Montana. Workshops were held for one week each in the communities of Arlee, St. Ignatius, Dixon, Pablo, Polson, Hot Springs, Ronan and Elmo. The workshops were designed to provide participants with an intense introduction to photography. Participating youth were encouraged to focus their picture making on who they were and where they lived. Family, friends and community were all part of this process, becoming the subjects of the young people's work.

Workshops took place four hours per day for five days in each community. Lunch was served each day, during which there were discussions and exchanges of ideas about work and the processes involved in the photography. Each week began with an introduction to the history of photography. Students were given the opportunity to view the work of various 19th, 20th and 21st century photographers and to get hands-on demonstrations of older cameras. Instruction included an introduction to the controls and operation of the single lens reflex-SLR camera.

Working in pairs, young people learned and practiced manual camera functions. These included setting exposures, focusing, framing the subject and holding the camera. This would give them the ability to control their images.

After this, the young people loaded the SLR cameras with 35 mm film and headed out to make pictures. Participants were encouraged to look closely at their communities and to notice details that they might want to include in their photographs, while paying close attention to how they operated and controlled the camera. After this short field trip, everyone returned to the classroom, where participants processed the instant 35mm film and edited their work. A discussion of each person's work included observations on how camera functions worked or could be improved upon, and how the pictures spoke to the idea and focus on their communities. Another full session was

devoted to making pictures.

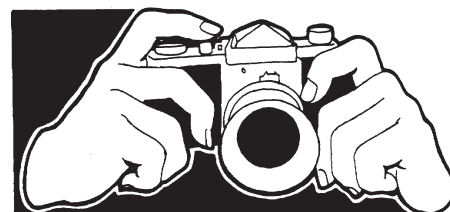
Spears states that one of most rewarding things about the wrap-up of each week-long workshop was watching the participants share their work with their families. During the first four days of the workshop, participants kept their work in a portfolio at the meeting site. On Friday afternoons, they showed their work with great excitement and pride to their families.

One young woman in the class was a junior at Mission High School. She said that she took the class because she has always been interested in photography and poetry. *"It's kind of like poetry in itself. You can do so much."* This straight-A student went on to add, *"Other people are out drinking and having parties and I'm out with my camera and notepad. It's a way of expressing yourself—trying to show your perceptions with a picture. It's something I really enjoy."*¹

The project was primarily funded by by the Montana Arts Council and their Artist in Schools & Communities Program and by the National Endowment for the Arts. The Polaroid Education Program donated film materials. Additional funding came from a number of local businesses. Spear hopes that they can make this an annual event, and has begun fundraising for next summer.

— David J. Spear and his wife moved to Polson in June 2000. He is a photographer and educator whose work has been exhibited in Europe and throughout the United States. In addition to the Flathead Project, Spears teaches an annual workshop for youth at the Maine Photographic Workshops.

¹Char-Koosta News, July 12th, 2001.



The Music Man

By Ryan Smart, PRC VISTA

I can truthfully say that it wasn't my decision to learn to play the piano. In fact, it would be closer to the truth to admit that I was *forced* into the activity. Now, I cannot fathom my life without music.

Like kids everywhere, I had weekly piano lessons coupled with a mandated 30 minutes of practice every night. The lessons were frustrating at times and I despised the fact that I had no choice as to whether or not to practice. In our family, we had to stay in lessons until seventh grade, after which it was left up to us to decide if we wanted to stick with the lessons or not. One night, near the end of sixth grade, I remember watching the Disney channel and hearing Tchaikovsky's "Flight of the Bumble Bee." The music was so impressive that I decided I wanted to play it. Both for the challenge and the desire to hear the piece again, I decided to stay in piano lessons as long as it took to learn the piece. It took a few months, but I learned it. The feeling of pride and freedom that I gained from achieving my goal was awesome.

After learning the Tchaikovsky piece, I decided that I would continue with my music. Shortly after that, I began composing. Spending most of my afternoons after school at the piano or a desk playing and writing mu-

sic, my love and passion for the art grew.

Sometimes, sitting at the piano, I become so focused that I lose track of time. I once sat down to write a piece for chamber orchestra. The next time I looked up, seven hours had passed. These works are a great source of pride and enjoyment for me. Music has become a fundamental piece of my identity. When I play for people, or show my orchestral works, many assume music always came easy to me and that I have always been excited about it. To their surprise, the opposite is the truth. Like any other art form, music requires patience. Passion only develops over time.

Music kept me busy through high school and undoubtedly played a large role in my decision not to use drugs and alcohol. It occupied my time and was a great source of confidence. Music was a way for me to develop a positive identity and common ground for communication. People knew me as the "guy who plays the piano" not the "party guy who could shotgun four beers." I developed a great relationship with my band director, and always had a strong connection with my piano teacher. This network gave me a foundation and a place in school that did not include alcohol or drugs.

I hope music will always be a part of my life—a part that I can share. To my mind, music is a language common to every culture in the world, a language of expression, passion, and humanity.

Building Skills for Life at the Holter

"I always come on Tuesday because this is *Art Day!*" an enthusiastic student recently exclaimed during her weekly class at the Holter Museum. Sara attends the museum's program for students of the Wakina Sky Learning Circle, one of several community partnerships. As the eight year-

A scholarship fund benefits about 10 percent of Holter art workshop students, insuring inclusion of those who want to participate in workshops but would be unable to afford the tuition.

old artist carefully transfers her drawing to a printing plate, she remains blissfully unaware that her creative problem solving is helping her develop skills for life.

The collaboration between the Holter and Wakina Sky enhances cultural learning opportunities for Ameri-

The Torchbearer

Ryan Smart is not just a talented pianist and songwriter, nor is he just a recent graduate of Carroll College and aspiring medical student. He has also been chosen to serve as one of 11,500 torchbearers who will help relay the Olympic torch from Atlanta to Salt Lake City for the 2002 Olympic Winter Games.

Ryan was nominated for this honor by Lewistown's Ron Lund, a family friend who has known Ryan most of his life. Lund has seen Ryan overcome a variety of illnesses and surgical procedures, most of which resulted from his premature birth. "In his first prognosis," Lund says, "He wasn't supposed to live past one or two. Then they said he'd only make it to 6 years old. They kept upping it and he just kept beating the odds."

Furgus High's Linda O'Hare said the honor could not have gone to a better candidate. "He's been through heck and back," she said. "He's one of those people who, no matter what you pile on, the sun keeps shining on him."

Ryan will carry the torch on January 27th, the day after his 23rd birthday. Though he was surprised by the nomination and his selection, he was not surprised to find that his hometown was still behind him. He responded by saying, "I think it would be a lot harder to do great things if you didn't have a great community to support you. I'm really honored to be chosen to represent that community."

Resource: "Hometown Hero to Carry Olympic Torch" by Jacques Rutten of the Lewistown News-Argus Online.

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The Art of Language

Native languages are taught in all schools on the seven reservations in Montana. Communities place a lot of importance on seeing native languages and cultures incorporated in school programs. Research indicates that native students have greater success in schools that reflect their roots. Montana is unique in that its constitution commits the state to preserving the cultural integrity of American Indians.

In the past, government policies meant that Indian children were separated from their families and punished for speaking their native languages. This inflicted deep harm on individuals and on tribal languages. Fortunately, today there is a widespread determination to provide opportunities to learn and strengthen native languages. In addition to the languages of the cultures indigenous to Montana, bilingual programs serve Hmong and Russian children in Missoula.

Burns Telecommunications Center, MSU

The Montana Indian Technology and Cultural Heritage Learning Centers project will establish reservation-based technology training centers at four tribal colleges within Montana. The centers, with assistance from the Burns Telecommunications Center, will work with tribal elders and leaders, as well as local youth, tribal college educators, and others, to teach digital preservation skills. The project will be a multi-generational effort to learn new skills in order to preserve the tribes' historical, cultural, and language resources. The content developed at the centers will be formatted as cultural modules and shared with the community and tourists in kiosks in the tribes' new field museums. Learning centers will feature high-end multimedia systems, hubs, and printers. Classes in website development, digitization of images and sound, networking, and creating Quick Time presentations and panoramas will all be offered. The centers will also offer basic courses on office applications and the use of the World Wide Web.

For more information, contact:
Ms. Terry Driscoll
312 Roberts Hall
Bozeman, MT 59717
(406) 994-5549
driscoll@montana.edu

QUIZ

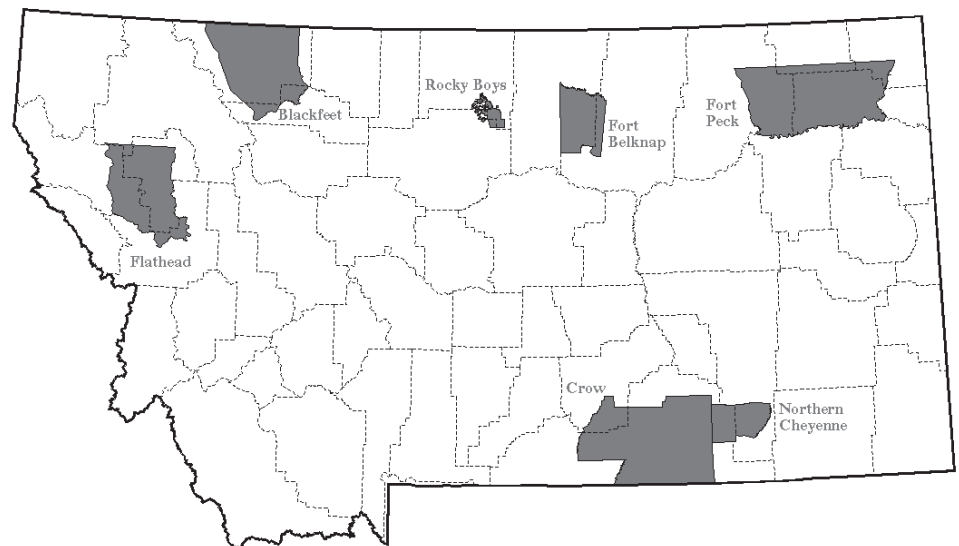
Can you identify the languages native to the Montana reservations?

Draw a line from the language to the reservation(s) where that language is spoken.

Reservation	Language
Blackfeet	Crow
Rocky Boy	Blackfeet or Blackfoot
Fort Belnap	Assiniboine
Fort Peck	Cheyenne
Northern Cheyenne	Cree
Crow	Gros Ventre
Flathead	Dakota (Sioux)
	Kootenai
	Salish

Hint: some reservations have more than one native language, and at least one language is spoken on more than one reservation.

Finished? Check your answers using the key on page 21.



Sticky Rice Cakes

First place poem: 12 – 15 year old division

Two sticks of incense protected in my clasped hands, a white cloth tied around my head. A male voice came over the microphone. I bow down once then again, gathering grandma's good luck. Sleep stirs in my legs. I shift and sit cross-legged still keeping my head low, my eyes on my cousin beside me. All the elders bow twice. I follow, gathering good luck that mom tells me is strong as the winds carrying grandma to grandpa. An unwanted sleep pulls at my eyes. My cousin leans toward me. How long is this? I shrug. I'm not sure just like the time I didn't know she would leave us. I look around the room, the smell of death swarming. Another man speaks, saying words I don't understand. There is more bowing and gathering but I am ashamed. There are more people sitting in chairs, looking and staring than on their knees, respecting. A different man speaks, his voice full of sorrow, now you may mourn your mother, he says in Hmong. We get up from our aching knees and walk toward the open casket. I take the death-cold hand into my own, wondering if these people ever saw what I had been blessed to see. My grandma, who worked in her garden, day and night, loving the sun at her back, every day piling me plates and plates of stiky rice cakes. I stand before her, drowning, my eyes tired and tear-stained, watching from an underwater world, before me, a barren garden, empty plates.

— Kao Nou Thao
Missoula

Proud to be Bilingual

I am very proud to be bilingual and do not agree with the idea of having to give up my first language and culture. I live in a home where I eat different food, listen to different music and speak a different language. I am my grandparents' little angel who talked to them in Hmong everyday when I was young. At age four, I had a fever which affected my language ability. My teacher worried about me pronouncing English wrong. Mommy referred me to speech and Daddy didn't let me take Hmong class. I was supposed to speak only English.

One night, I had a dream that my eighty-year-old grandmother was dying. I said I loved her, but it was in English. I struggled word by word in Hmong. She was gone before I finished saying I loved her. I cried in my dream. I told Daddy that I must go to Hmong class. I was born bilingual from the beginning. My first language and culture gave me strength to make up myself. How can I live in two cultures and speak only one language? My life will be more beautiful and interesting if I speak both Hmong and English.

— Monica Thao, 1998
Hellgate Elementary School, Grade 4
Missoula

The Life of My Ancestors

Bilingual education is important because it gives me opportunities to learn the life of my ancestors, and it helps me take the best out of both cultures to be who I am. I would not want to be anybody else but me because I have a very special gift.

I was born in Montana, but I know two cultures and that has added more colors into my life. My grandparents are two special people in my life. They share their traditional life with me and taught me Hmong, my first language. When I was a first grader, bilingual education became a big part of my life. When Hmong elders come to school to share their ways of life in Laos, I watch them with my eyes, I listen with my ears, and their words touch my heart.

As I was growing up, my grandmom lost her eyesight. I was really sad that she cannot see me growing up. But she told me that she can see me through her heart by knowing that I remain connected to both worlds. Without bilingual education, I would have become too American and my grandmom would not have seen me anymore. Thank you, bilingual education!

— Janie T. Lee
Missoula School District

Living in Two Worlds

I am a bilingual child who started with a blurry picture of my two worlds. I am just a kid, but I have a big task. I have the challenge to combine in myself both my Hmong roots and my new America culture.

I remember the day I held my grandpa's hand and walked him into my classroom. He told us stories, and he played us a song. At first, the song was only a piece of music, but when my classmates asked my grandpa questions, the music turned into knowledge. My grandpa cannot speak English, and his knowledge is buried inside him. If no one helps dig it out, it will be gone. We bilingual children will not grow as healthy as the other kids because a part of us will be missing. Bilingual education is important to me because it helps me keep the voices of my heritage while I learn new behaviors.

I am proud to be bilingual because I have two ways of looking at things, two ways of doing things, and two ways of saying things. I enjoy my two worlds. I am grateful that a little person like me can do two jobs.

— Kablia Lee
Missoula School District

The Stories Project: *Putting the Arts to Work*

By Kathleen Anne Benoit, Billings

A National Conversation

The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century 2002 marks the 100th anniversary of 4-H.

In celebration, 4-H is leading a nationwide effort to convene community conversations about youth development in the 21st century. After facilitating county conversations in all 56 Montana counties, 4-H will ultimately lead a statewide conversation with county delegates attending. Everyone with an interest in youth development is invited.

The culmination of these efforts will be the national event February 28 - March 3, 2002 in Washington, D.C. Each state will send a delegation of youth and adults to engage in dialogue with others from around the nation. Together, they will craft a youth development plan for the 21st century.

For more information, visit the web site at: www.4hcentennial.org/conversation

Last spring, a group of at-risk teens slated for failure beat the odds. They wowed a full house at the Billings Alternative High School gymnasium by successfully presenting a modest but heartfelt dramatic play based on the stories of troubled teens. Cast members included a 17-year-old habitual truant, a recently-released resident of a corrections facility for adolescent boys, an emotionally-disturbed 16-year-old girl, and a teenager who had spent her previous summer living on the street. Their achievement was facilitated by the Stories Project, a program sponsored by the Alberta Bair Theater, which encourages troubled teens to use all forms of art to tell their stories.

The most important contribution of the arts to education is its ability to connect with the students in profound and personal ways. At a time when educators and parents across the country are struggling to come up with new ways to motivate at-risk students to make safe choices and to stay in school, the arts can be an powerful and useful resource.

In Billings, an estimated 2,000 adolescents and teenagers are considered to be at risk of dropping out of school. Area educators need new ways to motivate teens to stay in school, but dwindling school budgets continually shortchange the arts as a valuable teaching tool. One solution came four years ago through a strong collaborative effort between the Alberta Bair Theater Arts Education Department, local arts organizations, and the Billings Public Schools. The result was the establishment of the Stories Project, which utilizes stories as a focus—and local and national artists to teach at-risk teens the skills, self-awareness and self-esteem needed to keep them academically engaged. Local administrators and teachers enthusiastically embraced the concept of an arts/education partnership

and viewed the project as a creative and effective way for troubled teens to learn to express themselves and to find positive developmental pathways.

According to Bess Fredlund, Education Director with the Alberta Bair Theater, the premise of the Stories Project is simple: "It gives teens the skills to express themselves in positive and artistic ways. Whether they are telling their stories through collage art or pounding out ancient rhythms on native drums, they are learning to value the importance of integrating art into daily life." Fredlund said educators view the project as a way to provide a sense of belonging to teens who have been unable to make social, academic, or athletic connections.

During its pilot year in 1998, the Stories Project involved 62 teens at Riverside Middle School, 50 percent of whom were from low-income families and 28 percent from minority backgrounds. In 1999-2000, the project added 32 additional students from Riverside. The following year, it was expanded to include Will James Middle School, in an economically-diverse part of the community. The program expanded to the Billings Alternative High School in spring 2001, where a group of 16 students participated in a full theater-arts workshop. During school hours, an artist-in-residence conducted the workshops two mornings a week for eight weeks, culminating with the spring play described above.

Project workshops range from music, videography and creative writing to hands-on training in the visual arts, theater, photography and drumming. Teachers and counselors identify students as being at-risk, and recommend them for the project. Participating students must sign a contract agreeing to adhere to project rules. Workshops are taught by local and nationally-known artists who use stories as a basis for artistic expression and

Continued on Page 15

The Stories Project

Continued from Page 14

who encourage students to explore ways to tell their own stories. Each class lasts for 60-90 minutes a day, one day a week for 8-10 weeks.

Workshop artists are selected for their artistic excellence, teaching experience and desire to work with at-risk teens. They include published writers, experienced drama teachers and directors, visual artists, professional musicians, photographers, drummers, and videographers. Each artist must complete a four-hour training session that focuses on the challenges of working with at-risk teens.

Fredlund says that the Stories Project makes the arts central to the community by involving a variety of community partners, including arts and cultural groups, educators, social service providers, and local businesses. Field trips are an integral part of the workshops. Artists accompany students and their families to local businesses and to performances at the Alberta Bair Theater; public readings at the Writer's Voice of the YMCA, exhibitions at area museums and to other cultural events.

Evaluating the success of the Stories Project comes from measuring individual accomplishments rather than mass data. According to Fredlund, every at-risk teen has his or her own

story. Each may have faced a myriad of obstacles: bad personal choices, difficult family situations, drug and alcohol problems and/or mental illness. These factors can combine to brand kids "losers" and "troublemakers." Fredlund noted that while educators have noticed remarkable changes in some of the students participating, the real benefits will reveal themselves in the future.

One short-term example of measurable success is that *every one* of the Billings Alternative High School students participating in last spring's production attended school regularly during the eight weeks of rehearsal prior to the play. All but one showed up for the performance. One of those, an 18-year old girl with a history of emotional and family problems, now regularly attends performances at the Alberta Bair Theater and has signed on with a local acting group. For her, the Stories Project fueled the desire to continue to use the arts as a form of self-expression and greater understanding.

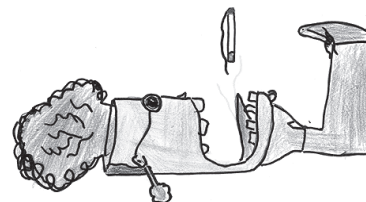
—For more information, call Bess Fredlund, Education Director, Alberta Bair Theater, (406) 256-8915 #204, e-mail fredlund@albertabairtheater.org, or visit www.albertabairtheater.org

The Stories Project is a program of the Alberta Bair Theater Arts in Education and is made possible through funding by Charles M. Bair Family Trust; Montana Arts Council; Montana Community Foundation; Montana Cultural Trust; Moulton, Bellingham, Longo, and Mather, P.C.; National Endowment for the Arts; New York Life; Homer A. and Mildred S. Scott Foundation; Target Stores Foundation; George & Patty Selover/Bill & Mary Underminer; and Western State Arts Federation.

CONGRATULATIONS

To promote National Kick Butts Day, all students in Sweet Grass County were invited to participate in a cartoon-drawing contest promoting the anti-tobacco message. The student art was judged at a local level, and then the entries were sent to Florida to be judged in a worldwide contest. Over 1,000 entries from over 47 countries were considered. In the 6-10 year old category, only three children from the USA placed. Two were Big Timber Grade School students. Kyle Stewart, a fourth grade student, won second place, and Matthew Einarson, also a fourth grader, won honorable mention. Kyle's poster and recognition of Matthew's Honorable Mention are online at: www.worldsfastestclowm.com/youth.html.

Tobacco is wacko!



Period

2nd Place Award: Kyle Stewart
Big Timber

Art Days

Continued from Page 11

The Helena Symphony sponsors young players when possible, and often includes them as understudy and replacement players. In addition, the symphony plays a youth concert every year, preceded by weeks of "music in the schools" preparation. Other Montana community symphonies may have similar programs. To reach someone who is bound to know more than these random tidbits, call 442-1860 or write helenasympphony@hotmail.co

can Indian youth, strengthens self-esteem, promotes the understanding of heritage, and enhances academic performance. Art education contributes significantly to personal and social development. Arts experiences build self-confidence and self-esteem in participants of all ages, but are particularly valuable for young people as they shape a healthy view of their own identity. Greater involvement in the arts helps promote understanding of cultural traditions and enhances respect for other cultures. Artwork nurtures critical thinking skills and the ability to plan

lic programs including art workshops, after-school classes, lectures, readings, museum tours, family events and grant projects. ART SMARTs, the junior docent program for students in junior high and high school, guides youth as they develop leadership, artistic, and teaching skills through activities at the Holter, where they serve as assistant art teachers, tour guides, and event volunteers. Docents (volunteer museum educators) lead tours and interpretive explorations of art works and concepts. This makes the Holter's exhibitions attractive field trip destinations.

Of particular importance to young people is the Holter's connection to schools. In a community where schools do not have art specialists at the elementary level, teachers express a need for quality workshops that help them provide adequate art instruction in the classroom. The museum presents workshops and events for teachers, and has led 20 area teachers in the development of learning-focused units to teach art to elementary students.

Last winter, 16 young people from the Helena high schools came together at the Museum for a two-month apprenticeship with painter Dale Livezey, in a project supported by the Montana Arts Council and the Montana Community Foundation. They

collaboratively developed a single design in order to create a sense of unity, then began painting a portable mural on sheets of plywood. Given the opportunity for personal expression, the young people were inspired to spend many extra hours painting after school and on weekends, with breathtaking results. Besides creating a mural that has been exhibited four times before being permanently installed downtown, two participants have found employment leading younger students in collaborative mural projects.

—For more information about these and other education programs at the Holter, contact Katie Knight at (406) 442-6400 or knight@mt.net.



Apprentice muralists Molly Madden and Eliot O'Connor tackle their sections of the last winter's mural under the guidance of artist-in-residence Dale Livezey.

Check out "Coming Up Taller: Arts and Humanities Programs for Children and Youth At Risk." This report illustrates the power of the arts and humanities to change children's lives. It describes more than 200 arts and humanities programs that provide children and teenagers with safe places to go outside of school hours, a chance to work with supportive adults, and an opportunity to build useful and creative skills. <http://www.usdoj.gov/kidspage/getinvolved/6.htm>

and carry out projects. Art class participants also practice communication and cooperation, abilities vital to living in a rapidly changing society.

The Holter Museum of Art provides a quality visual arts exhibition program that includes all media, brings national and international exhibitions into the region, provides a much-needed venue for local and regional artists, and collects, preserves and interprets significant contemporary Northwestern art. The Holter promotes participation by diverse audiences through outreach, innovative educational programming, and collaboration with other organizations.

Growing community participation is evident in many aspects of pub-

A Window Between Worlds

By Carmen Hotvedt, PRC VISTA, Helena

Youth of all ages are deeply affected by domestic violence. The abuser often targets and manipulates more than one family member. There are serious risks for children who live in homes that aren't safe for a parent, even when they themselves don't suffer physical blows. On the other hand, batterers will sometimes intentionally injure children in an effort to intimidate and control their adult partners. These assaults can include physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of the children.

At least five million children are witness to violence in the home each year. In a national survey of more than 2,000 American families, 50 percent of the men who frequently assaulted their wives also frequently abused their children. Slightly more than half of female victims of domestic violence live in households with children under age 12.

National Institute of Justice studies find that childhood abuse and neglect increase the odds of future delinquency and adult criminality by 29 percent. When young males are witnesses of domestic violence, they may act out by destroying property, hitting others, and yelling.

Female witnesses often turn inward, addressing their pain with eating disorders and low self-esteem. This can result in the tolerance of dating violence among teens, a problem that is far from uncommon. In fact, the Journal of the American Medical Association recently reported that approximately one in five female high school students reports having been physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner.

As children grow, so do their abilities to express themselves. For children and adults who are victimized by violence, verbal and written skills may not be sufficient to express the emotions they have about their abuse. One of the reasons for the failure of lan-

guage is that people are apt to *emotionally remember* traumatic experiences at the age they were when it occurred, rather than at the age they are at present. Specifically, a ten-year old may not be able to verbalize the violence he experienced as a toddler, instead remembering those events as if he were still a toddler. Teens who are exploring their sexuality may be weighed down with shame as they recall earlier violations. It can be difficult to verbalize these experiences to peers and counselors for anyone.

One way for youth witnesses and survivors of domestic violence to heal from and understand their experiences is to incorporate art expression techniques in support group settings. Programs in art expression/art empowerment, a non-diagnostic use of art to promote healing, can help young people define themselves in relation to other individuals and their own experiences. The process of using creative skills to express internal experiences allows children to encounter and organize what they may not be able to express in words.

In a sense, the use of a paintbrush creates an epistemological opportunity for self-discovery. In groups or alone, children may express

themselves without fear of judgment or repercussion because they are creating images of their emotions rather than explanations of and for them. Participants in art empowerment programs are free to make mistakes. They work through their stress and begin to feel good about themselves while learning to communicate their anger and frustration in non-violent ways. Art expression programs allow participants to recover a sense of safety, relaxation, power, responsibility, and identity.

In September, the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence Child Advocacy Project sponsored

"We are learning that creating heals the pain,"

**— anonymous survivor
and AWW participant**

smART Resources

Center for the Arts

"Art can change lives."

<http://www.center4arts.org/index.html>

Community Arts Network

The Community Arts Network (CAN)

project promotes information exchange, research and critical dialogue within the field of community-based arts.

<http://www.communityarts.net/can.html>

Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)

Do a boolean search for "the arts" from the main site, and see what turns up!

<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/index.html>

National Association of Counties (NACO)

A good PDF report about addressing community issues through the arts.

http://www.naco.org/pubs/research/issues/arts_programs.pdf

Coming Up Taller

Arts & humanities programs for children and youth at risk.

<http://www.cominguptaller.org/>

Network of Violence Prevention Practitioners

Some interesting links.

http://www2.edc.org/nvpp/web_links2.html

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The Spider Womyn Youth Art Initiative: *The Story of a Mural*

By Molly Madden, Helena

I am 19 and I direct a public art program for at-risk young women who are barely different from myself, and yet different from anything I have ever encountered before in my life.

The story is simple. I received a phone call from a woman who had known me as a youth leadership organizer and suddenly I found myself right back in the thick of pro-active positive social change. Anyway, I pulled a couple of all-nighters and produced a couple of simple but respectable grant proposals, and before I knew it, I had six grand in the bank and a project to produce. I took baby steps—one thing at a time, until suddenly I had a co-director and a group of young women artists and volunteers to work with.

My goal for the mural project was empowerment. I wanted the opportunity to work with young women, and to create a powerful and beautiful piece of art that we could all be proud of.

Girls came out of the woodwork. Sometimes they would flake out, sometimes they'd disappear for weeks or quit altogether. There were times when I painted all alone for hours on end, days and weeks at a time. But my goal was to create beauty and change. And in those hours alone, beauty and change did occur, sometimes quietly and subtly, sometimes violently like an earthquake of the soul. Men threatened to destroy the mural for "discriminating against them." People stole our equipment, complained, tore down our signs, and vandalized our work.

But we painted. Then we would take each other out to breakfast. Sometimes we would hold each other and cry. We would have potlucks and laugh. We would confront our own fears and ste-

reotypes, we would stress out and break down. And then we would paint.

And one day, I realized that I loved my work. I loved the process. I loved the girls. I believed in the vision. And I knew that we were already there.

Working exclusively with young women as a young woman myself was one of the most empowering elements of the experience. Refreshing and ridiculous, affirming and occasionally frustrating, exciting and somehow, though not surprisingly, safe.

Art cannot be superficially contrived—we *are* our own artwork. Our spirits are painted into and onto those walls. Not one of those women didn't stretch me. They taught me about life and love, survival and passion, courage and integrity. The artists changed and molded each other, themselves and the artwork.

I realize that I can change the world with my life now. I can love and support the everyday work that I do. We can achieve our highest ideals in the most mundane interactions. And I believe finally, that we shall overcome. That healing is possible. That divinity is within us every moment, and that creativity in so many of its forms, is an answer.

—Molly Madden is a youth advocate, activist and artist.

*poetry is how we breathe,
art is what we wear
principles not just believed,
but stacked against the walls
of will*

—from "righting on
the wall," by
Molly Madden



"Climb" is the name of the mural—appropriate for the space it occupies (stairwell). It also symbolizes overcoming obstacles created by our cultures and communities (brick walls), and finally, climbing to our own personal potential (the cimber and the phoenix).

*we do not live through our
dreams,
the dreams,
the dreams live through us*

—from "righting on
the wall," by
Molly Madden

A Window Between Worlds

Continued from Page 17

art expression training for children's advocates in domestic violence programs. For the past ten years, the training organization, *A Window Between Worlds* (www.awbw.org), has focused on using art as a healing tool for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Based in Venice, California, the program reaches thousands of women and children in shelters and domestic violence programs every year.

AWBW encourages child witnesses and victims of domestic violence to express emotions and experiences visually using a variety of media. Each workshop is presented with a warm-up exercise, the art activity, and a debriefing session. Workshop leaders from across the country share their experiences in a monthly newsletter through which new *Window Between Worlds* workshops are created

and shared. Participants in the Montana training were excited to incorporate art into their support groups and learned that they did not have to be artists in order to lead art expression workshops.

Art expression gives young people a chance to express their anger, frustration, sadness, and confusion in a tangible, visible way. The outcomes are hopeful: participants are encouraged to take pride in their work, to release their shame and anguish about their experiences, and to choose alternatives to violence and negative attention-getting behaviors. The finished pieces themselves are testaments to beauty, hope, and survival.

—Carmen Hotvedt, Child Advocacy Project Coordinator, can be contacted at carmenhotvedt@care2.com, or through the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, Box 633 Helena, MT 59624, 406-443-7794 fax: 406-443-7818; www.mcadsv.com



Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
www.mcadsv.com

Practical Tips on the Art of Prevention

At the heART of any activity is the talent of the young people involved.

Because they reach a wide audience, arts and performances are effective ways to prevent or reduce crime. They can refresh anticrime messages and allow youth to use their talents to deliver vital information to the community. In the process, the arts help youth develop a sense of identity, independence, discipline, and self-worth. According to research, students who participate in the musical and theatrical arts are less likely to drop out of school, use drugs or be arrested. Because dance, music, photography, and other arts transcend language, they often help to bridge cultural, racial, and ethnic barriers.

Identifying the age group targeted will help in the decision of how to present your message. What message do you want to convey? Do you want to make a general statement or target a specific problem? Focusing on one subject may make a stronger statement than including dozens of artworks dealing with dozens of different themes.

Art programs are unable to survive without sustained support and new re-

sources. Program leaders, therefore, need to identify resources on an ongoing basis. This requires research. Successful grant applicants must show a clear mission, measurable goals, and an independent evaluation of their efforts. In addition to financial challenges, programs face an ongoing need for rehearsal, performance, or display space. It is important to make a list of needed resources and add to it as new needs arise. Think of materials such as costumes, exhibit/performance space, materials for props, music, a program, and a way to publicize the event. Look for donations from schools, businesses, churches or other organizations. Recruit at least one adult adviser. People experienced in the artistic field you plan to use make good advisers.

Develop a schedule after considering such factors as whether you're presenting a published work or bringing a brand new play or song to the stage. Make sure youth have plenty of time to work effectively. Fostering communication and collaboration strengthens programs.

Evaluation works only if you decide up front what you want to evaluate

and how you'll do so. When evaluating your group's performance or display, you will want to show that your project does one or all of the following:

- Engages the talent of local youth in promoting a key crime prevention message;
- Provides opportunities for youth to use and develop artistic ability;
- Educates and raises community awareness of the problems or issues that your group has chosen to address; and
- Uses creative expression to transcend language and cultural barriers.

Resource: Online manual U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention *Youth in Action* January 2000, number 11 newsletter.

YouthActionNet.org

This site seeks to inspire and nurture present and future youth leadership worldwide. Their aim is to provide a virtual space where young people can share lessons, stories, information and advice on how to lead effective change. Youth can also get up-to-date information, resources, and the tools they need to strengthen their work in communities.

Sandplay: A Creative, Playful Pathway

By Barbara Boik

Many experiential therapeutic activities for children and for adults rely on the creative, expressive capabilities of the individual. Sandplay is one such therapeutic tool. It can be used with a broad spectrum of clients, including children, adults, families, couples, and groups, who may be experiencing a wide range of issues. Sandplay allows clients to avail themselves of the many benefits that access to the unconscious offers. It makes use of the imagination and creativity of the client and provides the dissociation that often is vital when dealing with difficult issues. Sandplay serves therapists of diverse theoretical orientations and can be used in conjunction with many therapeutic interventions.

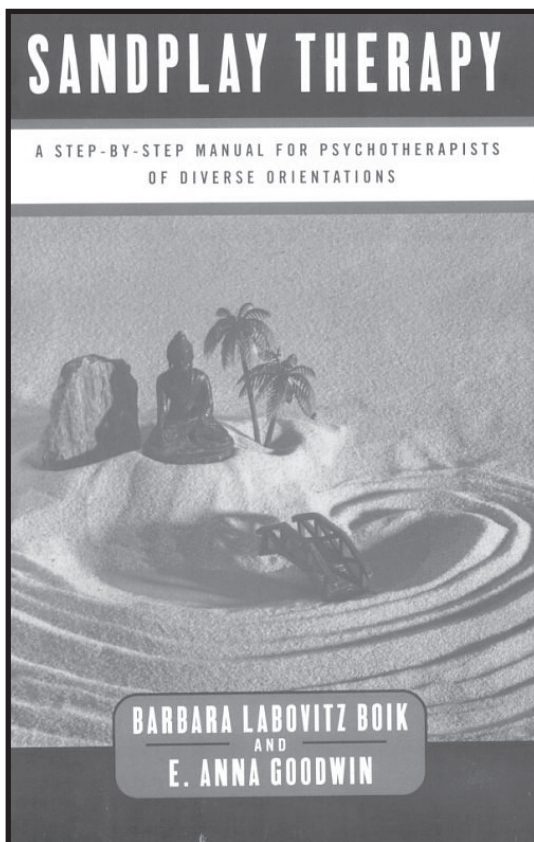
his difficulties, pain, or conflict. When this dilemma occurs, sandplay provides an opportunity for the client to represent in images what is happening in the person's inner or outer world. That is, the images become a language through which the client can communicate unconscious material to the therapist and to her/himself, resulting in greater understanding and behavior change. Like art therapy, the visual form supplants verbal interchange and bypasses the defenses of the client. The additional advantage of sandplay is that it allows the client to create aspects of the entire issue with symbolic objects that can be touched and easily changed. This process of play helps the client move from feeling like a victim of experiences to being a creator of experiences. When the therapist trusts the unconscious mind of the client to reveal its own unique and perfect path to self-discovery, deep transformational work can occur for both the client and the therapist."¹

The History

In the 1920s, Margaret Lowenfeld, a British pediatrician, originated the "World Technique." Her goal was to find a medium that would attract children and provide a means through which the observer and child could communicate. She believed that children thought in experientially vivid images instead of words. She also recognized the potential of using small toys to enable children to reveal their deepest, preverbal thoughts and feelings. Lowenfeld found that in the sand tray children communicated conscious and unconscious thoughts. The World Technique was a precursor to "Sandplay," developed and named by Dora Kalff, a Swiss Jungian analyst. As sandplay took hold as a powerful intervention, it was expanded from its Jungian theoretical foundation and developed as a modality for therapists of diverse orientations.

What is Sandplay?

"In a small tray of wet or dry sand the client arranges sand with or without miniature objects and creates a scene. The client, using the senses of touch, sight, sound, and smell, brings into physical form her/his innermost conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings. Sandplay, through the use of active imagination and creative symbolic play, is a practical, experiential tool that can create a bridge from the unconscious to the conscious, from the mental and the spiritual to the physical, and from the non-verbal to the verbal. Often a client does not have words or intellectual understanding of the source or solution of her/



Sandplay

Continued from Page 20

Applications

Assessment: Sandplay provides the opportunity to observe first hand the expression of the “inner voice” of the client. Hidden material that an individual is either unaware of, doesn’t have the words for, or wishes to hide often is uncovered. In addition to being able to witness this symbolic representation when working with an individual, the therapist also can observe the dynamics of a couple, family, or group. The communication with objects in a creative, interactive process allows the therapist to notice the dynamics in a way that a verbal report does not reveal. When the members of a couple, family, or group are viewed as a unit in a nonjudgmental environment, they are able to express who they are without fear of being blamed or compared to each other. The totality of the couple, family, or group’s dynamics as they construct their world or scene in the sand tray is a microcosm of their relational interaction.

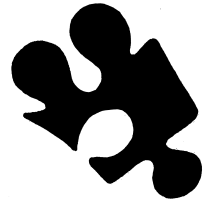
Prevention: “Healing professionals have known for some time that fantasy play in children facilitates the individuation process and fosters mastery of the adult world.... In recent years the rediscovery of the power of the child within each person, young and old, male and female, has encouraged mental health workers to use play therapy and other experiential therapies for all clients. Humans have a need and desire for play to free creativity, inner feelings, perceptions, and memories and to bring them into outer reality. Sand and water are particularly powerful tools to use in fantasy play. For children, sandplay is a natural form of expression and they are readily drawn to it. Most adults have had some childhood experience with sand, either at the beach or in a sandbox. Therefore, sandplay serves as a link to, or reminder of, past experiences and creates a doorway to the realm of childhood.”² Because there was no need for artistic skill and there were no particular cultural restrictions in childhood sand play, most adults and children feel free to create without self-criticism or con-

straint. Using sandplay to address developmental tasks, social interactions, ego strengthening, behavior change, reframing nonproductive or destructive belief systems, and mastery over new skills is a creative, nonthreatening, natural promoter of growth and change.

Treatment: Distance and dissociation as well as the playful, symbolic nature of sandplay make it a valuable tool for addressing painful, difficult issues. Often children are alienated when they are confronted with direct questioning. The use of the child’s natural language of play and imagination circumvents this directness and encourages expression. Often defenses soften and resistance diminishes. The use of sand and water for adults automatically transports or regresses them back to those areas that need to be healed or integrated. Sandplay allows the client to create a world that provides concrete testimony to inner feelings and thoughts. Some clients need to externalize and objectify significant experiences or traumas in their lives before the traumas can be resolved. Through playing out life situations in the sand tray, clients can overcome feelings of helplessness and inferiority and find resolution to unsolved dilemmas.

1. Boik, B. L. and Goodwin, E. A. (2000). *Sandplay Therapy: A Step-by-Step Manual for Psychotherapists of Diverse Orientations*. New York/London: W. W. Norton. p. xv
2. *Ibid.*, p.10

About the author: Barbara Labovitz Boik has a private psychotherapy practice in Bozeman, MT. She presents workshops and seminars nationally. For more information, and to learn about the Center for Creative Endeavors, contact Barbara at BLBoik@aol.com or by phone at 406-586-7515.



The Prevention Resource Center is streamlining its process. We are now clustering resource information by the week and posting it on our web site. To join the e-mail list for a weekly resource update, visit: http://www.prevention.state.mt.us/prc/resources/hot_news.htm

Key to page 12:

- 1) Blackfeet Reservation—Blackfeet or Blackfoot language
- 2) Rocky Boy Reservation—Cree language
- 3) Fort Belknap Reservation—Assiniboiné and Gros Ventre languages
- 4) Fort Peck Reservation—Assiniboiné and Dakota (Sioux) languages
- 5) Northern Cheyenne Reservation—Cheyenne language
- 6) Crow Reservation—Crow language
- 7) Flathead Reservation—Salish and Kootenai languages

smART Resources

*Boys & Girls Club of the Northern
Cheyenne Nation
Great new website!
www.ncbgclub.org*

*U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
New and improved website with great
time saving features.
www.ed.gov*

*May 2001 OJJDP Juvenile Justice
Bulletin
The Youth ARTS Development Project
[http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/ojjdp/
186668.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/ojjdp/186668.pdf)*

*Youth in Action
Music, drama, dance and visual arts
and their role in prevention. A National
Crime Prevention Council website.
<http://www.ncpc.org/yia/arts.htm>*

*Youth Info
Great arts links from the Correction
Connection.
<http://www.juvenile.net.org/arts.html>*

Art Therapy

By Rachel Larson Long, M.A., ATR

Recently I attended the American Art Therapy Association's national conference in Albuquerque. Approximately 1,500 art therapists gathered to share their successes, discoveries, philosophies, and approaches to healing through the creative art process. In session after session, I was reminded of the limitless possibilities of using art for personal recovery and growth, particularly when that process is facilitated by informed, trained, and competent therapists.

Art therapy as a profession began to take shape after WWII, when large numbers of returning veterans needed services for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other service-related issues. Early pioneers emerged from the psychoanalytic tradition, but jostled with Jungian symbolism, developmental, educational, and object-relations theories. Although the field still contains variations of theoretical basis, the core truth is that the creative process is inherently healing and empowering.

The letters "ATR" refer to "Registered Art Therapist." Approximately 4,000 art therapists are working in the United States, with every conceivable population. Art therapists also work in a variety of settings, including private practice, medical and clinical mental health settings, schools, and shelters. Although Montana does not license art therapists at this time, licensure is becoming available in many other states.

There are some undergraduate art therapy programs in the U.S. and other countries, but most art therapists earn undergraduate degrees in the fine arts, art education, psychology, social work, counseling, or a combination thereof. They go on to earn a Master's in Art Therapy. The course work is rigorous, and includes study in the areas of art therapy theory, developmental issues, counseling skills, clinical skills in assessment and treatment of various mental illnesses, work with various populations, and more. Students also complete a year of closely supervised internship. Some certificate programs are available, which provide training for

graduate students who already have an M.A. in a related field.

Following completion of the Master's level work, the art therapist may go on to earn their ATR by undergoing at least 1,000 hours of work supervised by another ATR, and by meeting all the requirements of the Art Therapy Credentials Board. At this point, members may become "Board Certified", earning the further credential "BC" by passing an extensive exam and regularly earning CEUs.

The art therapy profession also recognizes the value of the many arts-and-healing organizations at work in improving the quality of life in today's society. Whether they are called Art Expression, Creative Healing, or Self-Empowerment Through Art, these projects tend to be more media-oriented and visible than traditional clinical art therapy, which upholds strict standards of confidentiality. At best, art therapists can combine forces with those working in art-related services, by offering guidance and education. We are learning from these creative team-members as well, and gaining ideas and inspiration from the myriad of socially-conscious artists who reach out effectively to community members in need.

Although the following cautions were sent out to A.W.B.W. Children's Workshop leaders, they can apply to many adult populations as well.

Tips

- **Be considerate** of the child's level of trust, and don't try to elicit a certain type of response. Some may not be ready for disclosure of personal material, and some may disclose too much, leading to guilt and worry. In the latter case, reassure them and find time to follow-up after the group.
- Some parents or caretakers may be threatened by what comes up in the session. **Communicate the purpose of the group** to the parents, and offer tips on accepting and appreciating the child's art without criticism.

Continued on Page 23

Art Therapy

Continued from Page 22

- **Understand** that a child (or adult) who has been sexually abused may be confused or upset by certain art activities involving touch or body-image, such as body-outline drawing. Give them a choice of whether or not to participate, and/or make sure that the touch involved is very respectful. These individuals may show a “scrambled” or incomplete body image. Be ready to accept that.
- **Try not to over-interpret** the images produced, especially to the child. He/she could find it threatening or exposing to think that you can read “secret messages” in the art. Of course, it’s fascinating to speculate on the meanings behind the art, and some of it is obvious or intentional. But here again, enjoy the gifts of expression without appearing to judge the child or the art.
- **Accept the child’s level of symbolism.** Adults will consciously use symbolism and metaphor in their art, but children do so unconsciously. Discussing the metaphor in children’s art and play involves subtlety, and could be confusing to the child. Most younger than middle-school age are concrete thinkers. But the art allows a natural expression of subconscious experience, blending memory with conscious life. Art expression itself is valuable, no matter what level of meaning the person may ascribe to it.
- Finally, **be clear with staff,** clients and the media that this is *not* art therapy. The focus should remain on the child, and should put him or her in charge of the creative exploration. Remember that therapeutic issues may arise and feelings come up that require the attention of a therapist. Hopefully, project facilitators will recognize the need should it arise and go on to collaborate with a therapist for more in-depth treatment.

Keep in mind the powerful nature of art and imagery when facilitating the art experience. New research suggests that visual imagery transcends and connects the more highly developed parts of the brain that include the ability for verbal activity and the more primitive structures that trigger the fight/flight/ or hide responses. This makes the arts natural and effective means through which to reconcile conflicts and process disturbing memories. We are discovering hundreds of ways in which personal creativity can help people overcome difficulties, and I believe that we will move even more toward the creative arts therapies and the use of creative expression in a variety of situations in the future.

Community Arts

I am aware of some fine examples of Montana programs that involve the arts for prevention, personal support, and healing (which may or may not employ art therapists), including:

Very Special Arts—a multi-arts program serving developmentally disabled individuals;

Opportunity Resources—specializing in arts and recreation activities for disabled clients;

Community Bridges—expressive art for individuals with head trauma and brain injuries.

Living Arts—for cancer patients, survivors, and their families;

Camp Make-A-Dream—serving children with cancer from across America;

V.S.A. and Missoula Writers’ Collaborative—poetry with adolescents in residential treatment, and Day of the Dead writing projects;

Day of the Dead—a multi-arts extravaganza celebrating the lives of those who have passed on; and

A Window Between Worlds—a national program (out of CA) which brings art expression to residents of battered women’s shelters.

—*For more information, contact Rachel Larson Long, M.A. ATR, S.A.F.E. Harbour, Inc., P.O. Box 855, Pablo, MT 59855; jazzarts@ronan.net*

Arts and Performances for Prevention: A free bulletin

Here are some good examples of dance-, music-, and drama-related programs that have successfully combined strategies for crime prevention and crime reduction. This bulletin also identifies specific challenges and rewards of instituting this type of program, supplies tips on evaluating programs, and lists organizations and programs that youth may contact for additional information.

Get the Arts and Performances for Prevention. Youth in Action Bulletin online through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of Washington, D.C. http://www.ncjrs.org/html/ojjdp/youthbulletin/9912_1/contents.html

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VSA Arts

By Alayne Dolson, Executive Director



VSA Arts of Montana, formerly known as *Very Special Arts Montana*, is dedicated to promoting the creative power of people with disabilities. The organization is an affiliate of VSA arts, Washington, D.C., which in turn is a member of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Programs for children, youth and adults include programs in music, visual arts and dance, with an annual Governor's Art Show. Programs are currently active in Bozeman, Harlem, Missoula and Miles City, with support for programs in many other Montana communities.

VSA arts has had a strong creative writing program for youth with emotional disturbances, which is based in three of the residential treatment centers run by Missoula Youth Homes. The program, which has run for six years, has been replicated in two additional sites - Helena and Bozeman—as funding has been available. The program has pub-

lished an annual anthology of student work for the past five years.

Beall Park Art Center, a site affiliate partner of VSA Arts of Montana, has developed a year-long visual arts program for children with disabilities, which is an expansion of a summer program begun last summer. The program inspired children and youth and gave parents and teachers the awareness of the value of arts involvement for children of all abilities.

Children in the summer program participated in a VSA International Call for Art, through which they created boxes that were a personal expression of their dreams, ideas or visions. One of the artists, Daniel Linxwiler, created a box that he titled, "The Garden of Wheat." As a part of VSA arts of Utah's Art Access Gallery series, Daniel's box was selected

to represent Montana in the exhibit celebrating the artistic talents of children and youth during the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, January 18 through March 17.

VSA Arts of Montana will be sponsoring children's arts workshops in Billings in February during the American Bowling Tournament. Works of art will be created with bowling pins. VSA is also partnering with PLUK (Parents Let's Unite for Kids) to produce a mural created by children with disabilities for this event.

VSA Arts of Montana encourages artists of all abilities to participate in its programs. For additional information about VSA arts call 406-549-2984, Alayne Dolson, Executive Director.

Kids—love to play and laugh. Buddies and playmates. Parks and birthday parties filled with love and laughter and joy.

Life—things are better on the other side of the rainbow. Life bites but you still have to keep on living it to the fullest.

—From the VSA Creative Writing Program



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

A joint publication of the **Prevention Resource Center** and the **Addictive and Mental Disorders Division**



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